

## Community Development Committee

March 16, 2023

A meeting of the Community Development Committee was held this date beginning at 3:07 p.m. over video conference call.

Notice of this meeting was sent out to the news media.

**Committee Members:** Councilmember Robert Mitchell, Chairman, Councilmember Gregorie, Councilmember Parker, Councilmember Keith Waring (joined at 3:15 p.m.), and Mayor Tecklenburg. **Also Present:** Geona Shaw Johnson, Magalie Creech, Mallary Scheer, Chloe Stuber, Kat Hill, Robert Summerfield, Mandi Herring, Josh Dix, Eric Pohlman, Rick Jerue, and Patrick Carlson, recording.

The meeting opened with a moment of silence led by Chairman Mitchell.

### Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Councilmember Gregorie, seconded by Mayor Tecklenburg, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2023, meeting.

### Public Participation

None

### Old Business

None

### New Business

1. **Review and approval of the 2023-2024, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnerships Program, and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) awards from the Department of Housing and Urban Development.**

Geona Shaw Johnson said that there were some changes to the allocations compared to 2022-2023. She said that CDBG received a 1.89% percent increase, HOME decreased by 4.42%, and HOPWA received a more substantial 11.3% increase in funding allocations. She then asked Kat Hill to summarize how the allocations were being divided between the City and its non-profit community partners.

Ms. Hill said that the Department of Housing and Community Development recommended the following allocations for local programs beginning June 1, 2023, until May 31, 2024:

Of the \$859,853 awarded by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development for CDBG-eligible activities, \$270,000 would be allocated to non-profits and the remaining \$589,853 would be directed to the City's internal programs.

Of the \$571,221 awarded for HOME-eligible activities, \$195,683 would be allocated to non-profits and charter organizations leaving \$375,538 to fund the City's internal programming.

Of the \$1,173,416.51 awarded for HOPWA-eligible activities, \$868,664 would be allocated to HOPWA project sponsors and \$304,753 would be allocated to the City's internal programming.

Mayor Tecklenburg asked Ms. Shaw Johnson for a quick review regarding a proposal from the previous year that utilized HOPWA funding to purchase real estate to create some long-term affordable housing. She said they were able to do that successfully last year and they currently had an allocation of over \$269,000 in the HOPWA budget to secure affordable housing units in new building developments. She said they were recently able to secure four units of rental housing and could use the HOPWA allocation to make some similar deals.

On a motion of Councilmember Gregorie, seconded by Mayor Tecklenburg, the committee voted unanimously to approve Item 1.

**2. Presentation by Planning, Preservation, & Sustainability staff regarding allowable residential uses and densities for commercially zoned property.**

Mr. Summerfield said that his team had been researching how to reform the zoning code with the City plan in order to potentially accommodate different residential densities in commercial zones. Historically, zoning was used to exclude activities, businesses, and people in certain areas. However, throughout the years, Charleston had typically included considerations for residential activity in commercial zones, leading to the widespread rise of what the modern planning world called mixed-use, or multi-use, neighborhoods. He said that commercial corridors were prevalent features of any City planning efforts and tended to be the areas of focus and concern. As these corridors aged, it had become increasingly popular to use various opportunities to redevelop and revitalize those regions in order to create a more interconnected and diverse community experience. One of the main considerations in the adopted City comprehensive plan was ground elevation. Since many of the corridors and areas in question fell along the highest and driest parts of the City, it called for higher rates of intense and diverse development. In addition, considering the lack of affordable housing opportunities near job centers, these zones could also be used to alleviate transportation demands by orienting more people closer to their employment and further stimulating the development of these corridors.

Mr. Summerfield said that since development in the City tended to congregate around higher elevations, it was important to protect and encourage mixed-used growth because it encourages community while driving down municipal costs. These efforts could lead to reductions in traffic congestion, support economic diversification and create opportunities to utilize older buildings in new ways. The King Street corridor on the peninsula served as an excellent example of this approach and resulted in stimulating growth and providing new commercial and residential opportunities. Those principles could be used to create similar neighborhoods in other areas of the City that were also seeing rapid growth, such as West Ashley. Options for possible consideration included providing bonus density options to encourage affordable housing development, requiring simultaneous residential and commercial development, decreasing the by-right residential allowance, and eliminating residential approvals in industrial zones.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if the neck area of the peninsula would provide an opportunity for redevelopment because of the size of the traditionally industrial spaces. Mr. Summerfield said that the City already had a number of requests to convert industrial areas in the neck into residential developments with several projects already underway. He said that amount of interest meant the City

should reconsider where to appropriately zone residential sites in those regions in order to develop living spaces more mindfully.

Councilmember Gregorie asked how the groups involved in the development process considered the environmental effects. Mr. Summerfield said that, in addition to soil remediation, it could be helpful to require certain buffering effects to minimize the negative impacts of industrial proximity.

Councilmember Waring said it made sense to adjust the by-right residential allowance element or, at the very least, to require more public input to prevent less controversial property turnover. He said he was interested in figuring out the necessary steps to create a more inclusive policy that incorporated public input into the conversion from commercial to residential development process.

Mayor Tecklenburg said that the 1930s height requirement designations referenced by Mr. Summerfield early in the presentation showed building height limitations in both feet and stories and asked if that initial zoning plan served as an origin point for modern City height restrictions. Mr. Summerfield said that it was the first time it was codified as part of a zoning ordinance, but would have to check how it was regulated prior to 1931.

Mayor Tecklenburg said he agreed with Councilmember Waring that adjusting the by-right allowance would be helpful in addressing residential development delays, in addition to adding bonus density districts. He said it was a misstep for the City to not aggressively incorporate affordable housing programs into more of the apartment and housing developments that had been approved and finished in years past. Since previous appeals to the state legislature requesting the ability for the City to mandate inclusive zoning throughout the community had been denied, he said that it was a good idea to modify different local zoning classifications to allow for denser housing options that encouraged new affordable housing opportunities. He said they should also reconsider the zoning classifications of certain industrial areas that were not being used as much anymore and encouraged a more general business or mixed-used arrangement.

Councilmember Parker said that Folly Road had a mixed-use characterization that was seeing car washes, storage units, and other businesses being built in areas that were classified under light industrial definitions. She said that there were some cohesive efforts, like the multi-use path development, that were being enforced to create a more linked feel. However, the multi-jurisdictional nature of the region created less public input in the businesses that were being developed along that corridor.

Mr. Summerfield said that the City was trying to calibrate more targeted solutions during the zoning code rewrite process in order to address if the zone classifications worked within a variety of comprehensive City plans and projects. He said that his team would be reaching out to multiple groups in order to create more comprehensive zoning expectations and development outlooks.

Councilmember Gregorie said that he thought Mr. Summerfield touched on many great ideas but wanted to know how this differed from the concept of gathering place zoning.

Mr. Summerfield said that he did not know enough about it to answer at the time, but he would consult with Christopher Morgan and follow up with an answer soon.

Josh Dix said that he would advise against modifying by-right allowances because it could send a message to outside investors that West Ashley is not as receptive to new business opportunities. He said that it could result in investments transferring from revitalization efforts in West Ashley to new opportunities in North Charleston. Any attempts to modify density requirements could jeopardize potential investments and have a negative impact on mixed-use development overall.

Councilmember Parker asked Councilmember Gregorie for a quick breakdown of the issues around gathering place zoning proposals.

Mr. Summerfield said that one of his staff members informed him that one of the biggest issues with gathering place definitions was that it allowed higher densities while imposing more detailed design standards, which made it a more difficult district to navigate the development process.

Councilmember Waring said that having public input on by-right allowances was important because it helped guard against uninformed development that could create more unexpected negative impacts. He said that if that aspect threatened development signals to investors it would not be a new impact to consider. Balancing public expectation with attracting development was a constant struggle and should not be a deterrent to adjusting the by-right system.

Mr. Dix said he understood what Councilmember Waring said and supported having those conversations without advocating for eliminating by-right allowances.

Chair Mitchell said that he supported as many affordable housing initiatives as possible because it was not going to happen organically. This required an aggressive amount of participation to ensure attainable housing for all as the City continued to develop. He said too many factors were changing to expect outside support and it was imperative to research, direct, and partner with as many local initiatives as necessary to ensure affordable housing for the people that were being priced out of living in the City.

Mr. Summerfield said that he would enact some action steps based on the conversations from this meeting and would present a more comprehensive plan to the Committee in the future.

Councilmember Waring asked at what point would the City engage in a home rule challenge with the SC Supreme Court in order to accomplish what needed to be done in addressing affordable housing legislation.

Mayor Tecklenburg said that home rule was not a guaranteed path to establishing housing availability and believed that building upon the mixed-use zoning efforts of previous administrations was the foundation for comprehensive local housing reform. He challenged City staff to find multiple solutions to confronting the issue of affordability as a whole community and not just focusing on incentivizing single developments in targeted districts to set aside a limited number of units at more affordable rates.

### **Adjourn**

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 4:11 p.m.

Patrick Carlson  
Clerk of Council's Office